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SUBJECT: DEBY OPINES ON CHADIAN SECURITY, REBELS, AND OIL REVENUE IN  
OPEN PRESS CONFERENCE

11. (SBU) President Deby, in an unexpected move, held an unusually inclusive press conference August 11, which is Chadian Independence Day. The Presidency invited all of Chad's journalists, including -- exceptionally -- reporters from independent media, to the event. Deby spoke at length in response to questions taken at random. The main points, as quoted on the Presidency website, follow.

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FEBRUARY 2008 DISAPPEARANCE  
OF OPPOSITION FIGURE  
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12. (U) President Deby urged reporters to let the case of the February 2008 disappearance of opposition figure Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh work its way through the Chadian court system. He said no one, including him, should interfere with the judicial process but that all should have confidence in the judges and the system itself. Deby also publicly regretted that journalists tended to forget other Chadians who had disappeared during the February 2008 rebel attack. "On February 1, 2, and 3," he said, "we lost more than 700 Chadians. They are all important in my eyes, as head of state."

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REBELLION AS A BUSINESS  
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13. (U) President Deby said that he agreed with the perception that being a rebel was a "business" in Chad, but claimed that this was the result of Chad's complex history. He declared, however, that "bonuses" to rebels were over. "Rebellion has become nowadays the easiest way to welfare, and unfortunately this idea has been inculcated in certain groups of exploited youth," he said. (NOTE: Deby, last week on a visit to Faya-Largeau, had chided civil servants and community leaders in Chad's northern regions, accusing them of encouraging young men to join the rebellion by not providing education, jobs and other activities. END NOTE.)

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GOC DOES ITS BEST FOR SECURITY  
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14. (U) The President stated that the government was doing its best with regards to security, but invited comparison of Chad's situation with that of other countries, noting that there "zero insecurity" does not exist even in powerful countries like the U.S. He added that more than "700 gendarmes have been trained and will be deployed throughout the territory" while admitting that "this is not enough, but these efforts will continue because we aim for a far more efficient structure, as the security of fellow citizens is our

priority." Deby claimed that the inter-ministerial Arms Control Commission had already collected some 10,000 illegal firearms. Regarding eastern Chad, President Deby said that "measures are being taken to prevent the incursion of 'djanjawid' and other bandits" into Chad.

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OIL IS NOT THE ANSWER  
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¶15. (U) President Deby urged Chadians to stop thinking of Chad as an oil-rich country. Deby stated that, "Chad does not produce as much oil as other countries." The President explained that oil production had increased but oil prices had dropped, but that Chad had achieved many developments due to oil revenue.

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
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¶16. (U) The President told journalists that "the protection of the environment is at the heart of our fight, and that it should also be at the heart of the population's concerns." He further stated that "one third of the territory is desert and that desertification is making huge inroads" and that "one cannot talk about sustainable development without the protection of our ecosystem."

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COMMENT  
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¶17. (SBU) Deby's press conference, with invitations to independent as well as pro-government journalists, and his unscripted responses

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took many by surprise. His seemingly straightforward replies on a wide variety of subjects are uncharacteristic of the President. Senior GOC officials should follow the President's lead and seek opportunities to speak publicly with the press and to civil society.  
END COMMENT.

¶18. (U) Minimize considered.

NIGRO